



Calliope Crier

The Yakima Valley Audubon Society is people dedicated to the enjoyment and preservation of the natural world. Through birding, education and conservation activities in our community, we raise awareness and promote the cause of global environmental protection.

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A Chapter of the National Audubon Society

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PROGRAM ARTICLE

BILL DRENGUIS

Costa Rica – A Shared Adventure with George Vlahakis

By December, the foliage of the Yakima Valley will be stark and sterile. Outside temperatures will be frigid. Why not join us for a celebration of the warm colors of Christmas captured through the lenses of George Vlahakis' eyes and cameras? Feathers of green, red, blue, yellow, and all other tones and shades imaginable. George, and his wife Susan, made two recent trips to Costa Rica and will present images so sweet you may want to skip dessert! Regale in the saturated colors of



Keel-billed Toucan
Photo By George Vlahakis

Keel-billed Toucan, Scarlet Macaw, or Golden-hooded Tanager. Or perhaps marvel at a camouflaged Great Potoo perched on a dead branch making *the branch* look alive. Will we glimpse the national bird of Costa Rica, the vivacious Clay-colored Thrush?

George has presented several programs for YVAS and the only way you could be disappointed is if you do not attend.

Christmas Potluck Dinner and Silent Auction

On December 4th, we will be holding the annual YVAS Christmas Auction at the Yakima Area Arboretum. There will be a silent auction for the larger items as well as the popular bargain table.

However, we need items to auction. Think of your talents and/or resources. How about sponsoring a dinner or brunch in your garden? Maybe you could offer a weekend at your vacation cabin. Otherwise, bird related items are the best. As auction proceeds go directly to fund education and conservation activities for our chapter, it drives our success.

It helps to have the items on display when the first members arrive. To make this happen, I can pick them up before the auction, or you may leave the items at Yakima Pediatrics (314 S. 11th Ave.), just let them know that it is for Ellen. To arrange for a pick up, you can reach me at 965 - 5808 or email me at bdrenguis@gmail.com

In addition to your potluck items, be sure to bring serving utensils for your dish. Also you will need your own table service (plates, cups, silverware). To ensure return, be sure to place your name on serving bowls/platters and utensils.

The doors will be open at 5:00 pm at the Yakima Area Arboretum and table decorating should be completed by 6:00

pm. The Silent Auction, wine service, and camaraderie will be underway by 6:00 pm. All foods need to be there by 6:15 pm as dinner starts at 6:30 pm. Arrive early enough to browse through auction items prior to dinner. To ease prolonged waiting in the potluck line, our president will cue individual tables to enter the serving line.

Potluck food assignments are by the first letter of your last name: **A-G = Main Dish; H-P = Potatoes, Vegetables, Salads; Q-Z = Desserts, Bread & Butter.** Dishes need to serve about 12–14 people. *It would be helpful to list the ingredients of your dish for those with allergies – milk, nuts, shellfish, wheat, etc.* We will be providing ham, coffee, and hot water for tea; punch will also be furnished. Wine will be available by the glass with donations defraying the cost.

If you are a member who has not been attending monthly meetings, this is a great time to get acquainted with some like-minded people, enjoy a great meal, and surf the auction's treasures.

If you have any questions, please contact Bill Drenguis: 965-5808 (or e-mail him at bdrenguis@gmail.com).

Before Dec 2 - Donate, Donate! On Dec 4 - Bid! Bid!

Visit the Yakima Valley Audubon Society's website at: <http://www.yakimaaudubon.org>



PRESIDENT'S COLUMN

ANDY STEPNIIEWSKI



The holiday season is fast approaching and your Yakima Valley Audubon Society has a number of events planned. First and foremost the annual potluck dinner will be December 4 at the Yakima Area Arboretum. This fun event kicks off with a Silent

Auction. Please consider contributing auction items or events to this fundraising event. Following the auction, we sit down to our now-legendary potluck dinner, featuring lots of yummy dishes made by YOU. We then head south to tropical climes and take an armchair tour to Costa Rica with George and Susan Vlahakis. George will combine the best photos of two trips they've taken to this fabulous country, with its many reserves and parks, overflowing with colorful tropical birds, including the stunning Resplendent Quetzal, declared by Roger Tory Peterson as "North America's most spectacular bird."

The Education Committee is busy planning for the fourth annual Youth Environmental Summit on November 14th, at the Yakima Convention Center. This event is sponsored by Yakima County Public Services, Solid Waste Division. This day-long conference will be attended by 3-500 junior and high schoolers from around the county. It provides an opportunity for students to learn about environmental issues that affect their homes, schools and communities, and how they can make a difference. There are two featured speakers: Dr. Marcus Erik-

sen, founder, 5 Gyres Institute, "Plastic in the Ocean," and Beth Terry, Author, "Plastic-Free: How I Kicked the Plastic Habit and How You Can Too". At the summit, students will also be participating in hands-on events and there is collaboration time for schools. Where Yakima Audubon comes in, is as one of the environmental exhibitors. We, along with other local organizations, will have display booths that students will visit during their breaks. In keeping with the theme of "plastics", April Adamson has created a display board highlighting threats to seabirds and Osprey from plastic. Four Yakima Auduboners will be attending to explain and involve the students.

YVAS and Washington Audubon, in partnership with and the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife have finished the first year of the "Songbird Surveys," a project to census for shrub-steppe species of concern on state wildlife lands that have shrub-steppe habitat. We met with Christi Norman, WA Audubon coordinator for this project on November 5 to plan 2015 surveys. I see this as an important project to elevate recognition of shrub-steppe ecosystem and protection for non-game species.

The Thursday morning walks along the Poppoff Trail on the South Greenway continue, too, starting at 8:30 am. YVAS has two Christmas Bird Counts: Toppenish NWR on December 20 and the Yakima Valley on January 3. Celebrate our winter birds and help contribute to a growing database on our region's birdlife on one or both of these counts! See details on these birding opportunities elsewhere in this Crier.



MEMBERSHIP

JOY MCKINNEY

Thank you for renewing your Membership!

Naches: Tom Elliot and Katrina Strathmann

Yakima: Becky and Tom Boyd, Mary Lou Rodzilsky, Janet Shaw, and Richard Repp

Please note that the above membership renewals are for Yakima Valley Audubon membership. Renewals to National Audubon are separate and are not listed here.



THIS MONTH'S YVAS CALENDAR

- Dec 4** YVAS Chapter Meeting at the Yakima Area Arboretum at 7:00 pm.
- Dec 20** Toppenish NWR Christmas Bird Count. See page 4 for more details.
- Jan 3** Yakima Valley Christmas Bird Count. See page 4 for more details.
- Jan 11** Board Meeting at 7:00 pm at Joe and Karen Zook's house (625 Pickens Rd).



The Yakima Valley Audubon Society meets on the fourth Thursday of January, February, March, April, May, August, September, and October at 7 pm at the Yakima Area Arboretum, located at 1401 Arboretum Drive, Yakima, WA. Guests are welcome at these meetings. The Annual Meeting of the Society is held the first Thursday of December at 6 pm. The Board of Directors meets each month **except** December at 7 pm at locations announced in the *Calliope Crier*. Members may attend Board meetings; however, please notify the host because of possible space restrictions.

Trails and Wilderness Interest Group – TWIG

TWIG is a group of people with varying interests who use National Forest lands, mostly for recreation. This group was started about 20 years ago, and is the only one of its kind in the U.S. Meetings are hosted and run by the USFS Naches Ranger Station. I have been attending these meetings for two months. There are members of several groups represented in TWIG: Several motorized recreation groups including Jeep, motorcycle, ATV and snowmobile clubs; Backcountry Horsemen; Washington Native Plant Society; the Cascadians; Chinook Pass Cabin Owners; hunters and (now) Audubon.

The last meeting was Tuesday, November 4. At this meeting, Kelly Lawrence - The new District Ranger - was introduced. She discussed her background and history with the USFS. Her philosophy is about providing multiple opportunities for all forest users. She enjoys working with people and is looking forward to working with TWIG to provide a full spectrum of opportunities for all. She looks at recreational patterns to aid her in planning how the forest will be used and accessed.

Jodi Leingang of the USFS spoke next. She is in charge of the upcoming Little Naches Collaborative Landscape Restoration Project. This project has funding for “aggressive” restoration, meaning an accelerated process. Congress has approved funding for implementation of this project, and Jodi reports to them on it. The main goals of the project are to restore fish passage and to eliminate adverse conditions in riparian areas. NO NEW ROADS will be built to facilitate this project. The project covers 1.9 million acres, referred to as the Tapash. Collaborative partners are USFS, The Nature Conservancy, WDFW, Washington DNR and Yakama Nation.

In the Little Naches area, there are three areas of focus:

1) Forest Health – Fuels management and reduction, reducing cost of fire suppression, addressing disease issues.

2) Aquatic restoration

3) Public access

A Collaborative Group (committee) is being formed to help plan this project. Some people who were present at Tuesday’s TWIG meeting are already involved. The USFS is looking for public input prior to planning. They want to identify what needs to be done, how and when. This project has a relatively quick timeline. Jodi pointed out that this group and this project are about representing interests, not positions. They will be putting a calendar of meeting dates and times together and others are welcome to join. The Chair of this committee is Lloyd McGee – his email is lmcgee@tnc.org. Contact him if you would like to be involved with this committee. If you are interested in joining the Collaborative Group committee to help plan the Little Naches Restoration Project, their next meeting is scheduled on December 3 from 10 AM to 2 PM at the Naches Ranger Station. This is an important project, and it would be great to have some more Audubon members involved.

Bill Zimmer, USFS Resource Assistant, spoke next. He told the group that the Soup Creek Bridge was to be replaced 11-5. It was previously thought that this would not happen in 2014. This will allow the Sno Park there to be open this winter.

TWIG is a great place to get information on what is going on with our National Forest Service Lands. TWIG also provides opportunity for feedback to the USFS, so that our voices may be heard. There are also volunteer opportunities with the USFS that you can learn about there. TWIG is open to the public. If you are interested, it would great to have more Audubon members present. The next meeting will be Tuesday, December 2nd at 7 PM at the Naches Ranger Station. If you have any questions about TWIG, feel free to email me at gadzooks7@charter.net.

— Karen Zook —

YVAS Election Results

At the October chapter meeting, the following positions were filled by a unanimous vote:

Secretary – Vera Backstrom

Treasurer -- Karen Zook

We were unable to field a candidate for the President-elect position. If anyone is interested in becoming more active in the leadership and direction of YVAS, please feel free to contact any board member.

Also at the meeting, the membership voted to adopt the Bylaws changes exactly as printed in the September and October Criers.

Pursuant to this Bylaws revision, at the November board meeting President Andy appointed Teresa Lorenz as chairperson of the newly created Environment Science Committee and Denny Granstrand to a Director position.





Feeding Station at Yakima Area Arboretum Repaired

On Oct 18, Joe and Karen Zook, Richard Repp, Vera Backstrom and I worked on the bird blind at the arboretum, repairing damage from vandalism and sprucing up the landscaping. A garbage can full of bird seed is behind the blind and will be replenished throughout the winter.

If you stop by the blind and there isn't any bird seed on the ground, please feel free to scatter some seed. Be sure to scatter it within three feet of the brush pile and the vegetation as predators also visit the site and birds feel more comfortable foraging next to cover.

Never visited? Park at the gravel parking area north of the arboretum's main building, walk northeast past a large, bushy pine tree, and continue in a north-east direction. As you approach the trees and bushes on the east side of the lawn, look for an obvious break in the trees that leads to the compost area. Stay south of the piles and in a short distance you come to a trail. Turn left and soon you see the blind on your left. Sparrows and other seed eating birds should be plentiful! On the way out, check the arboretum's hawthorn and crab apple groves for species that prefer fruit.

— Denny Granstrand —

Photos of Joe and Denny working on the blind. Top photo by Vera Backstrom. Bottom photo by Karen Zook



FIELD TRIPS LUKE SAFFORD

Thursday Weekly Morning Birdwalks at 8:30am—

Weather permitting, *every Thursday*, **EXCEPT** for Thanksgiving week when the walk will happen on Wednesday. Meet the group at the Poppoff Trail/Jewett Pathway parking lot at the

east end of Valley Mall Blvd, at the north side of the eastern most roundabout. Join us every Thursday for leisurely birding and good company! Contact Luke if you have any questions at - luke@terraceheightsbaptist.com

Toppenish Christmas Bird Count—December 20

The Toppenish NWR Christmas Bird Count, now in its 32 year is set for **Saturday December 20th**. Meet at 7:00 a.m. at the Branding Iron Restaurant in Toppenish (junction of US-97 & SR-22). You will be assigned to a team to cover a specific portion of a 15-mile diameter circle in the Lower Valley.

Interest and enthusiasm are key requirements. We will train you! Following the count, at 4:30 to 5:00 p.m., we meet at Andy and

Ellen's house in Parker Heights to go through the tally, warm up with a bowl of soup, potluck contributions (salads, desserts, etc.), drinks (hot and cold!), and recount the day's experiences.

Perhaps this year we will find our first Snowy Owl for the count!

Toppenish CBC Compiler:

Luke Safford

(luke@terraceheightsbaptist.com or 833-6081)



Yakima Valley Christmas Bird Count—January 3

Birders have been meeting on cold mornings for the start of the Yakima Valley Christmas Bird Count for the past 44 years.

How many birders have participated in the count? Many! In fact, the count has been going on for so long that most of the participants in the early counts are now deceased. It is in their memory that we gather the 45th edition of the Yakima Valley CBC. We will meet at the Old Town Station at 2530 Main St. in Union Gap (northwest corner of Main St. and Valley Mall Blvd.) on **Saturday January 3rd** at 7:00 a.m. to separate into birding teams for a delightful day of birding.

How many birds have been counted in all of those years? The species total is 149 and the total of individual birds counted is 813,612! That is a lot of birds and a lots of miles walked and driven to find them.

After the day of birding we meet for the compilation pizza dinner. Location and directions will be given to participants on the morning of the count. Bring a potluck beverage or dinner item (salad, dessert, etc.) and plan on an entertaining evening of camaraderie.

Yakima CBC Compiler:

Denny Granstrand (dgranstrand@gmail.com or 453-2500)



BIRD SIGHTINGS

DENNY GRANSTRAND

Gray-crowned Rosy-Finches nest in the alpine meadows at high elevation. Finding them in breeding season entails taking a long hike up steep mountain sides. They winter in the grasslands at much lower elevation, feeding on the seeds of grasses. Finding them is still fairly difficult and hit-or-miss (usually miss).

On a trip through the Yakima Training Center on Nov. 15, Andy and Ellen Stepniewski and Eric Heisey hit the jackpot! They found a small flock of rosy-finches near Taylor Pond but they quickly flew off to the south. Nearby were two American Tree Sparrows, the first of three groups they found feeding in willow thickets along Cold Creek Road. Later on Hog Ranch Butte, with the wind chill close to zero degrees (birders have to be tough!), they found a flock of about 50 Gray-crowned Rosy-Finches feeding in Russian thistles right beside the road. This group was very accommodating and Ellen and Eric were able to get great photos.

The Thursday Morning Bird Walkers on the Poppoff Trail on Nov. 13 got three great views of a female Peregrine Falcon, which seemed to follow them around their walking route. They also saw a high-flying Prairie Falcon and several Evening Grosbeaks, which were the first seen in the valley in quite some time.

Jeff Kozma was working in the Wenas on Nov. 7, and in the campground found 19 Pine Grosbeaks. He also found two White-headed Woodpeckers roaming around the campground. Other visitors to the campground have found Northern Pygmy-Owl, Hairy Woodpecker, Pacific Wren, all three nuthatches, Varied Thrush and Red Crossbills.

Anna's Hummingbirds have become numerous in the Yakima Valley in recent years. I sent an e-mail to BirdYak recently asking people who had one of these little jewels visiting their yard to let me know. I still have one visiting our feeder, which I rotate during the really cold days and bring in at night. Stepniewskis had one coming to their feeder as of Nov. 5. Joy McKinney had one visiting the remaining salvias and hummingbird mint agastaches in her yard north of Selah. Sunny Edwards reported on coming to her feeders in Cottonwood Canyon. Stan and Lori Isley saw one in their yard on S. 18th Ave. and two were seen nearby on S. 19th Ave.

Richard Repp was wandering around the Yakima Area Arboretum on Nov. 16 and found two Bohemian Waxwings in a flock of Cedar Waxwings in the hawthorne grove toward the north end of the arboretum grounds. Bohemian Waxwings nest in northern Canada and are infrequent visitors to our valley.

On his way home, Richard drove west on Walnut and spotted a Peregrine Falcon perched on top of the water tower at the Del Monte plant. The Rock Pigeons in the area must be providing a food source for this powerful hunter.

Andy visited Clear Lake on Nov. 17 and found two Trumpeter Swans in a small open area in an otherwise frozen lake. During a stop along Rimrock Lake he discovered a small flock of Common Redpolls. Common Redpolls nest farther north in the Arctic than do Bohemian Waxwings and generally only come this far south during hard winters.



Gray-crowned Rosy-Finch on the YTC
Photo by Ellen Stepniewski



Pine Grosbeak
Photo by Denny Granstrand



Bohemian Waxwing
Photo by George Vlahakis

Yakima's Vaux's Swifts Phone Home from Roseburg, Oregon

Editor's note: Larry Schwitters, Audubon Vaux's Happening Project Coordinator, presented our August chapter program on Vaux's Swifts. Below is a recap of the tracking effort originating in our fair city. More information on Swifts can be found at: www.vauxhappening.org/

Audubon's Vaux's Happening's first ever attempt at radio tracking migrating Vaux's Swifts began in Yakima a bit before sunrise Sep 5 on the roof of Johnson's Auto Glass. We had done our homework, had owner permission, permits, and police notification. We also had a thousand dollars' worth of six tiny radio transmitters that needed six healthy Vaux's Swifts to fly them to Mexico. For that purpose a mist net was quietly set up alongside the chimney opening.

Swifts started coming out of chimney three hours later and the number hitting the mist net was well beyond six before we could get it down. Eighteen little swifts got weighted and checked for parasites. All but two were obvious hosts to what are probably species specific tiny lice. We wondered if the captured swifts would even be able to fly away as once they realized they couldn't get out of the net, they all closed their eyes and played dead. One at a time six birds got activated transmitters Gorilla Glued to their backs. There were no apparent injuries and all birds were all able to fly away from their alien abductors. Radio signals were detected as each flew out of sight. The transmitter's battery life of 30 days matched the expected life of the attachment.

There was concern that the swifts would abandon the Johnson Auto Glass roost site. That concern was justified as the evening after the capture only 11 roosting swifts were documented in all of Yakima. Not only did they abandon the capture roost, they abandoned the city. For the next five days no swifts entered the capture roost, but on Sept. 11 they were back in force as Richard Repp documented 753. The numbers were normal after that and the flow of swifts into Johnson's continued until Oct. 5 when 72 roosted for the night.

Kevin Lucas and some of Yakima's amateur radio people, especially Bob Rutherford, put a lot of effort in the downtown area listening for transmitter signals with nary a chirp. The tagged swifts were gone.

We only had six expensive receivers on loan from the forest service to detect these six birds on their journey down to Mexico. I had shipped one each to roost sites in Portland, Eugene, Roseburg, Healdsburg (CA) and San Francisco. Los Angeles was slated to be shipped one once the



Phil Fischer, Kevin Lucas, and Teresa Lorenz.
Photo by Larry Schwitters.

birds cleared San Francisco.

So the evening after we released the swifts, Audubon types at the three major roost sites in Oregon would begin scanning the flocks of circling Vaux's for one or more of our tagged birds. They were instructed to keep at it every night until I told them to stop. A pleasant surprise was that's exactly what they did. I had also engaged the amateur radio community in Western Oregon to back them up. It took a while for the radio-heads to decode what equipment would best pick up the signals but their participation was enthusiastic.

Still the chances of our ever hearing again from our little birds didn't look good. But on Sep 11, the same day the swifts returned to Johnson's Auto Glass, two were detected in Roseburg. Detection was by Liz Gardner, OR/WA BLM Peregrine Falcon Technical Coordinator and Lead Wildlife Biologist for the Swiftwater Field Office, and she had no doubts on the quality and strength of the signal.

If you figure these two swifts headed west down the Columbia then headed south down I-5, they had traveled 362 miles in 6.5 days. That's an average of 55.7 miles per day. Nothing unreasonable about that.

Further south, eager monitors with receivers were stationed at known roost sites in Healdsburg, CA and the north shore of San Francisco Bay. Between Sep 14 & 24, these two sites clicked off 280,000 swifts. Unfortunately, no signals were detected. One wonders if perhaps transmitters may have been scraped off due to the numbers of swifts crawling over each other inside the mega-roosts visited in Oregon and California.

The tracking project definitely spiked the annual effort volunteer observers put forth on the swifts' southbound migration. A total of 264 observers compiled 543 observation events at 60 suspected roost sites and tallied a whopping 1,145,468 roosting swifts.

I want to thank Yakima Valley Audubon for their generous project support and the following key players in Yakima: Teresa Lorenz (permit obtainer, transmitter installer, and lice crusher); Phil Fischer (chimney climber and net



A tagged swift flees the hands of Teresa Lorenz and Larry Schwitters. Photo by Kevin Lucas

manner); Kevin Lucas (able bodied swift catcher and technician); Richard Repp (ground crew); and Bob Rutherford (radio tracker).

-- Larry Schwitters --

Yakima Valley Audubon Society Membership

Renew my annual membership to the Yakima Valley Audubon Society to receive 10 issues of the Calliope Crier and all chapter benefits. National Audubon membership and Audubon Magazine are not included with your YVAS membership.

Yakima Valley Audubon Membership\$ 25.00 per household
 Yakima Valley Audubon Senior (62+) OR Student Membership\$ 15.00 per household
 (please circle which apply)
 Yakima Valley Audubon Society Life Membership\$ 500.00 per household

I do not want to receive any solicitations or communications from NAS (please check if applicable)

I prefer to read the Crier online and not receive my copy by mail (please check if applicable)

Please make any corrections to your contact information as needed.

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Email address _____

Please return this form and your check payable to: **YVAS**

Send the form and your check to: YVAS Membership
 P. O. Box 2823
 Yakima, WA 98907

*** If you have any questions on membership, please call Joy McKinney at 698-4110**

2014 YAKIMA VALLEY AUDUBON OFFICERS AND BOARD

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			YVAS Email	(<i>birds@yakimaaudubon.org</i>)	

Check out these photos and more from George's trip
to Costa Rica on his website at:
www.pbase.com/photon180



Coming Attractions:

Dec 4 Christmas potluck, silent auction, and
program at the Yakima Area Arboretum
at 7:00 pm.

Dec 20 Toppenish NWR CBC

Jan 3 Yakima Valley CBC